

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 03462 231602Z
ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5062
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S E C R E T BRUSSELS 03462

NODIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 4.)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, NATO, NPG, BE
SUBJECT: ENHANCED RADIATION WARHEAD: MESSAGE FROM
THE SECRETARY

REF: STATE 44903

1. THE SECRETARY'S LETTER TO FOREIGN MINISTER SIMONET WAS DELIVERED TO HIS CHEF DE CABINET ALFRED CAHEN FEBRUARY 22, IN THE TEMPORARY ABSENCE OF SIMONET.
2. WE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY LATER ON FEB. 22 TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY CHIEF OF NATO AFFAIRS, BAL, WHO HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH CAHEN.
3. THE INITIAL FOREIGN MINISTRY REACTION (PENDING RECEIPT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VIEWS) WAS SERIOUS CONCERN. WE WERE TOLD THAT BELGIANS, WHILE WILLING TO CONSULT ON THE ISSUE, WERE GREATLY CONCERNED THAT THEY WOULD BE PUSHED INTO HAVING TO MAKE A DECISION

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BEFORE SUFFICIENT TIME HAD ELAPSED TO PERMIT A CONSENSUS OF POLITICAL FORCES IN BELGIUM TO EMERGE. THE RISK, IN SUCH A CASE, WOULD BE THAT INTERNAL POLITICS IN BELGIUM MIGHT NOT PERMIT A FAVORABLE DECISION.

4. THE BELGIANS TOLD US THAT THEY WERE AWARE THAT THE USG WANTED TO HAVE THE ER/RB QUESTION ADDRESSED BY

ITS ALLIES BEFORE REACHING A DECISION AND THAT THEY HAD INDICATIONS THAT A MESSAGE SIMILAR TO THE ONE RECEIVED WAS BEING PREPARED. THEY ALSO TOLD US THAT THEY WERE AWARE OF AN INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE WEST GERMANS TO HAVE THE ISSUE RESOLVED QUICKLY. THE BELGIANS SAID THEY COULD UNDERSTAND USG "FRUSTRATIONS" WITH THE SLOW-MOVING BELGIAN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, BUT SAID THAT THIS WAS A FACT OF POLITICAL LIFE IN BELGIUM. THEY ASSERTED THAT PRESSURE FOR QUICK DECISIONS UPON THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT RAISED THE SERIOUS RISK THAT A QUICK DECISION WOULD COME OUT NEGATIVE. THEY ALSO CLAIMED THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS NOT EQUIPPED TO ADDRESS SEVERAL IMPORTANT POLICY QUESTIONS AT THE SAME TIME. THEY COMPARED THEIR POLITICAL SYSTEM TO ELECTRICAL CIRCUITRY AND NOTED THE DANGER OF OVERLOADING THE CIRCUIT WITH THE RISK THAT ALL THE FUSES MIGHT BLOW. AT THE MOMENT, THE HAWK-HELIP ISSUE AND THE RESULTING CRITICISM OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSES MANAGEMENT OF BELGIAN DEFENSE POLICY HAS THE ATTENTION OF EVERYONE IN BELGIAN POLITICS CONCERNED WITH MILITARY ISSUES. THE ER/RB WEAPON QUESTION HAS NOW BEEN ADDED TO THE LOAD AS AN URGENT ISSUE AND SEVERAL OTHER IMPORTANT POL/MIL ISSUES (E.G. COLLOCATION, JOINT STORAGE SITES) ARE PENDING. THUS THERE HAS BEEN A "CONVERGENCE" OF DIFFICULT PROBLEMS COMING TO A HEAD NOW.

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5. WE WERE TOLD THAT WE COULD EXPECT THE BELGIAN PERMREP AT THE FEBRUARY 24 NAC DISCUSSION TO TAKE THE LINE HEREIN SET FORTH AND TO TRY TO OBTAIN MORE TIME BEFORE A BELGIAN DECISION ON THE ER/RB ISSUE IS REQUIRED. CHAMBERS

SECRET

NNN

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